



## **IFES Quarterly Report: January 1 – March 31, 2005**

### **Liberia Support for the Conduct of the Electoral Process**

**USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 669-A-00-05-00013-00**

**Under USAID Leader Agreement No. DGC A-00-01-00004-00**

**Project Period: November 1, 2004 – April 30, 2006**

**Total Budget: \$4,800,000 Expenses Recorded to Date: \$953,176**

### **Results Summary**

- IFES continued with preparations and implementation of NEC county office refurbishment. Following extensive consultations with NEC and UNMIL, IFES decided to contract United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to construct six new buildings utilizing a new floor plan prepared for IFES and NEC by Milton and Richards Inc. The reconstruction and refurbishment of another four NEC offices were awarded to local contractor Simeon Williams. IFES will also provide storage facilities for the NEC at the county offices.
- IFES continued to support operational planning by NEC working groups on electoral access, voter registration, voter education, logistics, staffing, and political parties.
- IFES supported the voter registration process by providing advice on the design, process and procurement of voter registration material and equipment. IFES also assisted the NEC by procuring key voter registration equipment and material, such as scanners and film.
- IFES contributed to the development of political party finance regulations. IFES advised the NEC on issues relating to disclosure and enforcement and worked with the NEC to develop disclosure forms and guidelines. IFES also facilitated a seminar on political party finance, attended by members of political parties.

### **Background**

With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra in August 2003, Liberians committed themselves to political, versus military, competition for the control of Liberia's reconstruction, and to the holding of national elections in October 2005. The prospect of democratic elections prompted significant support from the international community, including the U.S. government, which solicited support from IFES in planning for the 2005 elections cycle through its standing grant from USAID and a short-term CEPPS agreement. In September of 2004, IFES and its CEPPS partners, IRI and NDI, submitted a proposal in response to a USAID program description designed to support a credible and competitive electoral process.

The design of the IFES project was informed by extensive consultations with other international agencies providing electoral support, particularly the UN and the European Commission, and with other partners, including the National Elections Commission (NEC) in Liberia. With funding through the short-term CEPPS agreement received in March 2004, IFES also conducted an electoral assessment planning mission to Liberia to develop a strategy for international support, an operational planning concept, and a cost projection for the Liberian electoral process. Consequently, IFES identified areas of immediate need and, in June, received USAID funding through its grant to provide assistance to:

- Develop and strengthen the legal framework for the electoral process; and
- Enhance the capacity of the NEC to organize elections.

Work under this CEPPS agreement builds on the activities conducted under the grant and the findings of the April 2004 assessment mission.

IFES' program between now and the October elections will focus on the professional and infrastructure development of the National Elections Commission (NEC); assisting the NEC's electoral operations; providing assistance to NEC's budget; improving electoral access for citizens with disabilities; promoting the electoral enfranchisement of returning refugees and internally displaced persons; facilitating the effective monitoring of political party/candidate expenditures; increasing NEC's capacity to prevent and resolve disputes; and enhancing the effectiveness of the Supreme Court to adjudicate electoral disputes.

## **Details of the Program**

IFES established its on-site presence in Liberia under previous agreements in mid-July. IFES' team in Monrovia this quarter consisted of the IFES Country Director, Chedomir Flego, an experienced election administrator and electoral assistance expert, the recently departed Project Manager, Brian McMahon, responsible for overseeing general operations and procurement for IFES in Liberia. The team was supplemented this quarter, with the arrival of Carmina Sanchis-Ruescas in January, the Director of Programs responsible for Voter Education and Outreach. IFES also hired several local staff members to support the activities of the field office.

In its provision of technical advice and support to the National Elections Commission, IFES collaborates closely with the UNMIL Electoral Unit, which is coordinating donor assistance to the NEC, and the European Commission. To promote collaboration, maximize impact and avoid duplication of effort, IFES meets frequently with its international partners to plan initiatives and review the various activities being undertaken. IFES also meets at least twice a month, if not more, with its CEPPS partners, IRI and NDI, to coordinate assistance programs, and once a month with all USAID partners. IFES program activities this month included:

## **Activities**

### **1. Voter Registration**

Following on the voter registration assessment conducted by IFES and UNMIL in October 2004, IFES has been working with the NEC and other international advisors to finalize a plan for the

voter registration process scheduled to begin on April 25, 2005. This work was undertaken through the voter registration working group established by the NEC. In January 2005, IFES facilitated a visit to Ghana of NEC's IT staff to study the Electoral Commission of Ghana's system for the computerization of the voters register. The NEC IT team was accompanied by IT staff from UNMIL's Electoral Unit. The Director of IT, Electoral Commission of Ghana, Hubert Akumiah, then traveled to Liberia under IFES contract, where he was joined by IFES IT consultant Ronan McDermott. McDermott and Akumiah worked in Liberia for three weeks, providing assistance in the development of the NEC's system to computerize the register.

IFES provided input into the design of voter registration materials, the equipment necessary to support the recommended Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) system that Liberia has chosen to employ, and staffing and infrastructure needs for a successful voter registration process.

This quarter, IFES assisted the voter registration process by procuring two DRS PS 900 Optical Mark scanners. IFES rented a further two scanners, and secured two more scanners through a loan from the Electoral Commission of Ghana. IFES also assisted the NEC by procuring the film and photo fix needed for the voter cards. IFES also secured the loan of cameras from Ghana and Sierra Leone, and procured spare parts needed throughout the voter registration process. These materials will enable the production of voter cards with photographs and of a registration roll with photographs, both important security measures which will enhance the integrity of the registration roll.

The IFES Senior Advisor for Africa and Governance, Susan Palmer, also returned to Liberia in March to provide additional technical assistance to the NEC, focusing on the areas of electoral procedures and the development of the legal framework, as well as the Commission's outreach to key stakeholders. She will be based in Liberia throughout the electoral process.

## **2. Strengthening the NEC's Infrastructure**

IFES continued to take steps to provide support for the development of a portion of the NEC's infrastructure outside of Monrovia. Following an assessment of infrastructure needs and architectural plans for NEC offices in the counties funded under IFES' grant, IFES awarded a sub-grant to the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and to a local contractor to carry out construction and renovation work. IFES has committed to rehabilitating ten (10) of the eighteen (18) NEC county offices. NEC is to either rent offices or work out of the county administration buildings in remaining eight areas.

Renovation work is expected to be completed in April in the following three locations: 1) Harper, Maryland County; 2) Greenville, Sinoe County; and 3) Kaweaken, River Gee County. Construction of six NEC offices is expected to be completed in May in the following locations: 1) Gbarnga, Upper Bong County; 2) Totota, Lower Bong County; 3) Voinjama, Lofa County; 4) Sanniquellie, Upper Nimba County; 5) Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount County; and 6) Bopolu, Gbarpolu County. IFES is scheduled to work on the NEC office in Zwedru, but UNMIL peacekeepers are currently occupying that site.

IFES has also been working closely with the NEC to identify priority needs for county warehousing. In the next quarter, IFES will procure containers to store equipment and material to be used throughout the electoral process.

In addition, IFES has been working to improve the NEC's operational capacity. With the NEC's county offices being the implementation arm of the Commission, transportation facilities for the staff in the country is critical for the effective administration of elections. To that end, IFES has procured twenty motorcycles and helmets for NEC county offices and key headquarters personnel.

IFES has also contributed to the strengthening of the NEC headquarters' infrastructure. In January 2005, IFES procured a generator for the NEC to improve the efficiency of NEC operations. IFES has built twelve new offices at the NEC HQ to provide accommodation for the expanded new NEC structure, and to settle staff in their new positions. IFES has also provided computers and communication equipment to assist the NEC with its operations.

### **3. Political Finance**

This quarter, IFES began working with the NEC to develop guidelines for financial reporting and training political parties to promote the timely and accurate submission of reports. In January 2005, IFES consultant Craig Donsanto traveled to Liberia to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the capacity of political finance regulators and other key stakeholders in Liberia to implement disclosure and enforcement regulations. Mr. Donsanto advised the NEC on issues relating to disclosure and enforcement and worked with the NEC to develop disclosure forms and guidelines.

IFES facilitated a seminar on political finance reform with political parties and the NEC. The goal of the seminar was to build consensus around the need for a coherent system of campaign finance disclosure and to define the responsibilities of the NEC, political parties, and civil society organizations with regards to ensuring compliance with existing law. Achieving consensus among stakeholders vis-à-vis the need for reform is crucial to the success of the overall political finance program in Liberia.

### **4. Voter Education**

IFES has continued working with the NEC to develop its voter education strategy targeting refugees, returning refugees, IDPs in camps, and IDPs in host communities within Liberia. In this quarter, IFES has contributed to the development of voter education materials. IFES provided technical support to the development of the NEC's voter education trainer's manual.

IFES has also contributed sections on voter education in cooperation with partners and stakeholders. IFES prepared the chapter on disabilities included in UNMIL voter registration training manuals. IFES has also worked closely with disabled persons organizations to make recommendations to the NEC on improving electoral access. In addition, IFES has produced a

number of brochures pertaining to voter registration including a brochure on frequently asked questions and voter registration steps.

#### **Activities Planned for Next Quarter (April 1 – June 30, 2005)**

- Completion of construction work on NEC county offices.
- Continued IFES support for the finalization of the Campaign Finance guidelines and regulations.
- The National Stakeholders forum, jointly sponsored by IFES, NDI and IRI.
- An IFES-funded public information campaign including door-to-door canvassing, street performance and radio commercials.
- An IFES assessment of Liberian laws pertaining to election dispute resolution, resulting in the development of training materials on best practices in election dispute resolution.
- Support for the delimitation of electoral districts.
- IFES will support operational planning by NEC working groups on electoral access, voter registration, voter education, logistics, staffing, and political parties.

#### **Evaluation Framework**

An evaluation framework will be submitted next quarter as part of IFES' Workplan. Progress toward the objectives for the programs described in this report and future reports will be measured against this framework.